

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family, Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, September 23–27, 2007

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The *Alpha-Amylase-Family-positive* people met together already for the third time at the 3<sup>rd</sup> *Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family* (ALAMY\_3) held at the Smolenice Castle in Slovakia, September 23–27, 2007.

It was the third symposium in the established series of the symposia on the  $\alpha$ -amylase family (<http://imb.savba.sk/~janecek/Alamys/>). The effort to organise the ALAMY\_3 has been based on the success of the preceding two symposia, ALAMY\_1 (Janecek 2002) and ALAMY\_2 (Janecek 2005), which were evoked almost ten years ago by the rapidly growing knowledge on this enzyme family and its enormous scope. The Scientific Program Committee led by Stefan Janecek (Bratislava, Slovakia) and consisting further of (in alphabetical order) Pedro M. Coutinho (Marseille, France), Richard Haser (Lyon, France), Takashi Kuriki (Osaka, Japan), E. Ann MacGregor (West Lothian, U.K.), Pierre Monsan (Toulouse, France), Kwan-Hwa Park (Seoul, Korea), John F. Robyt (Ames, IA, USA), Birte Svensson (Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark), and Marc J.E.C. van der Maarel (Groningen, The Netherlands) made every effort to prepare as attractive as possible scientific program making again the ALAMY\_3 platform for informal discussions about the most recent results and international collaborations in the field of the  $\alpha$ -amylase family in its widest sense.

The ALAMY\_3 Symposium was attended by more than sixty people (Fig. 1) from 19 countries throughout the world – Europe (36; Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands), Asia (15; China, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea), America (11; Canada, Mexico, USA) and Australia (2). The scientific program was focused on various aspects of the  $\alpha$ -amylase enzyme family including mainly the topics from the glycoside hydrolase (GH) clan GH-H, i.e. the  $\alpha$ -amylase family (the families GH13, GH70 and GH77) as well as the related families GH31 and GH57, but a space was also given to topics from the metabolism of starch and glycogen including the applied aspects as well as the various families of starch-binding domains (i.e. the so-called CBM

families). It started with the Keynote Lecture given by Bauke Dijkstra on “Structural and functional characterization of a glucansucrase ( $\Delta$ N-GTF180) from *Lactobacillus reuteri* 180, a GH family 70 enzyme”. The entire program was arranged into five following sessions: (i) The Clan GH-H; (ii) The families GH31 and GH57; (iii) Metabolism of starch and glycogen; (iv) Applied aspects of starch hydrolysis; and (v) Starch-binding domains as CBM families; and consisted of 27 lectures (14 Invited Lectures and 13 Oral Talks) and 36 posters. The Oral Talks were carefully selected from the submitted abstracts by the Scientific Program Committee members and the posters were on display during the entire Symposium. The ALAMY\_3 Special Lecture was given by Manuel Palacin who presented a talk entitled “The structure of human 4F2hc ectodomain provides a model for homodimerization and electrostatic interaction with plasma membrane”. The program was closed with the Closing Lecture by Birte Svensson (Seo et al. 2008) speaking about “An enzyme family reunion – similarities, differences and eccentricities in actions on  $\alpha$ -glucans”.

The Committee decided also to establish a *Lifetime Achievement Award* for a significant and worldwide recognized contribution to the knowledge on the  $\alpha$ -amylase enzyme family. It is a moral prize in the form of a glass prism in which the three-dimensional picture of an  $\alpha$ -amylase model is engraved by laser. The Committee arrived at the conclusion that the ALAMY\_3 Award was given to Ann MacGregor (Fig. 1). As usual at the ALAMY symposia, there were also the Poster Awards for the three best posters.

The Local Organizing Bratislava Committee made every effort to prepare a pleasant social program, too, for all participants (Fig. 2). It included: (i) the Opening Reception on Sunday evening just after the arrival and accommodation in the Castle; (ii) the supper at the court of the Castle with country music and dancing on Monday evening; (iii) the trip to Bratislava on Tuesday afternoon with a short guided tour in the historical centre and a dinner in the Vinum Galeria Bozen

(Matysak) in the city of Pezinok joined with tasting the wines of Slovak provenance; and (iv) the Banquet on Wednesday evening with the unforgettable Banquet Speaker Richard Haser with his famous lecture entitled “When structural biology helps to understand sugar-processing enzymes and to stay in touch with the sweet  $\alpha$ -amylase family”.

All activities were accompanied by the marvelous gossamer weather (Fig. 2) that together with the attractive Castle atmosphere enabled all of us to spend again a few days of inventive work and fruitful relaxation.

It is also a great pleasure to acknowledge the financial help of the ALAMY\_3 sponsors: Ezaki Glico Co., Ltd. (<http://www.glico.co.jp/>); Novozymes A/S (<http://www.novozymes.com/>); Samlip General Foods Co., Ltd. (<http://www.samlipgf.co.kr/>); and Danisco A/S (<http://www.danisco.com/>). My sincere thanks go also to the members of both Scientific Program Committee and Local Organizing Committee for their invaluable help, to all participants for their coming, to all authors for submitting their manuscripts, and to all referees for their generous reviewing.

And it is my privilege to announce here that based on the meeting of the Scientific Program Committee during the ALAMY\_3 it was decided to keep the tradition and organize the next ALAMY\_4 Symposium in the Smolenice Castle again in autumn 2010!

#### References

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Fig. 1. Pictures from the ALAMY\_3 Symposium.



Fig. 2. Pictures from the ALAMY\_3 Symposium.